

# Thinking About Leadership

## Thinking Like A Leader

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There are as many definitions of leadership as there are leaders. Another attempt at defining leadership will (and should) be easily forgotten. Therefore, let's focus on three principles that all good definitions of leadership promote. From these principles you can develop your own definition.

### 3 PRINCIPLES THAT DEFINE LEADERSHIP

**Principle #1: Leadership is influence.** Whatever else leadership is, it starts with influence. True leadership is not ultimately a matter of power, position or pressure, it is matter of influence. Originally, "influence" conveyed the idea of something flowing from one body to another in a way that effected the outcome of the second. A Smart Leader realizes her life must flow into the lives of others so that the outcome might be different. As Warren Blank has said, "All leadership is influence." True, for without influence one does not lead .

**Principle #2: Leadership determines outcome.** Everything rises or falls on leadership. A good definition of leadership places the success or failure of any endeavor squarely in the hands of a leader. This means that Smart Leaders welcome the responsibility that comes with leading. They realize that while they cannot accomplish anything on their own, their leadership is vital to success and is to blame for failure. Successful followers have a successful leader.

**Principle #3: Leadership requires followers.** Malcolm Forbes has commented that 'No one's a leader if there are no followers.' Or as our favorite proverb states it: The woman who says she is leading but has no followers is only taking a walk! Smart Leaders are not looking for blind followers people who will step in line with whatever orders are given. Rather, the Smart Leader looks for a team of followers who will share the experience of accomplishing great things. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing as a team. Smart Leaders attract followers.

With these three principles in mind, take time to develop your own definition of leadership. If you had to define 'leadership' in one sentence what would you say? Three sentences? In one page?

### THE ACTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Thinking about leadership means thinking about the actions of a leader. What do leaders do? How do leaders act? What separates leaders from followers? To assist you in thinking about the actions of leaders, we offer ten general actions of leaders. To help you remember the list, we've built it the acrostic LEADERSHIP. With each action we give a brief explanation that hopefully will spark some thought.

## WHAT LEADERS DO:

**L- Learn.** All leaders are learners. When you cease to learn, you cease to lead. "The one who has ceased to learn ought not to be allowed to wander around loose in these dangerous days." -- M. M. Coady.

**E- Engage.** A leader will be able to influence followers only in proportion to how much she engages them on an emotional level. Smart Leaders engage people in four ways: a consistent ethic, a contagious enthusiasm, a course of excellence, and continual empowerment.

**A- Anticipate.** Leaders are always asking two questions: "What happens next?" and "What happens after what happens next?" Although no one can predict THE future, effective leaders constantly anticipate possible futures.

**D- Demonstrate.** Leaders model for followers the qualities required for success, when Smart Leaders demonstrate integrity, innovation and intelligence. You attract what you reflect, but you reproduce what you are.

**E- Evolve.** Leaders never stop growing. Smart Leaders realize that they are on a journey that requires the conquering of ever-steepening mountains. Yesterday's approaches, attitudes and attributes do not always help in today's climate. The heights that a leader obtains are directly proportional to the level to which they evolve. Stop changing and you die.

**R- Reproduce.** Leaders reproduce other leaders. The ultimate action of Smart Leaders is that they reproduce other Smart Leaders. A leader's successors determine his success.

**S- Solve.** One of the great works of leadership is problem solving. While problem solving is not the sole work of leadership, it is a defining characteristic. Your ability to successfully solve problems will determine your stability. Your ability to influence others will determine your success.

**H- Hope.** A Smart Leader's actions will inspire hope in her followers. She has the unique ability to communicate hope in all that she does. Napoleon rightly quipped, "A leader is a dealer in hope." But remember, the Smart Leader must have a vision in which all hope is focused. Hope without vision is aimless wandering.

**I- Initiate.** Leaders take action, they initiate, invent, adapt and improvise. An indecisive person will never lead. One mantra for leaders is Napoleon Hill's famous avowal "Do It Now!"

**P- Persevere.** When seized by a vision, Smart Leaders never give up! They persevere until completion. Samuel Johnson writes, "Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance."

In thinking about leadership, take time to ponder the acts of leaders. Thinking precedes action and action precedes feelings. Smart Leaders determine the actions of leadership and then act as leaders.